Rockefeller Implies JFK Knew of Plots

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By Lou Cannon
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Vice President Rockefeller suggested yesterday that President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert may have known of Central Intelligence Agency plots to kill foreign leaders, but he offered no evidence to prove it.

Rockefeller said the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers and a "real problem of amnesia among those still around" had made it impossible for the commission he headed, which investigated CIA domestic activities, to reach any firm conclusions about White House involvement in alleged assassination plans.

But after saying the evidence was inconclusive, the Vice President added:

"I think it's fair to say that no major undertakings were taken by the CIA without either knowledge and/or approval of the White House."

Rockefeller's comments came while he was explaining, on "Meet the Press" (WRC, NBC), the reasons the published report by his commission did not deal with the assassination plots. Material relating to the plots was transmitted separately to President Ford, who is due to turn it over to the Senate intelligence committee.

Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho), said Friday that his committee has yet to uncover any evidence that "would directly link" any President with the CIA's "involvement in this kind of activity."

Former CIA Director John A. McCone said on June 6 that the CIA planned to kill Cuban Premier Fidel Castro in the early 1960s. But McCone said the authority for the planning was granted before he took over the [illegible]ncy on Nov. 29, 1961, and said it was unclear to [illegible] who gave the order.

Th[illegible] plans apparently were handed down "both at the close of the Eisenhower administration and the early part of the Kennedy administration," McCone said.

Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale has indicated that he drafted contingency plans for dealing with Castro in August, 1962, soon after reports that Soviet-made nuclear missiles were about to be installed in Cuba. Lansdale has indicated that these orders came from Robert Kennedy, then the At-

See ROCKEFELLER, A2, Col. 1

ROCKEFELLER, From A1

torney General, although Lansdale has denied being told explicitly to set down the Cuban premier's murder as an option.

Without mentioning any names, Roderick Hills, the present White House counsel on intelligence matters, said last week that "there have been public statements by witnesses which would suggest a greater degree of blame on individuals in prior administrations than the official record of their testimony."

While responding to questions yesterday about why the commission he headed had not delved further into the assassination question, Rockefeller said, "Many of the people have died who were allegedly involved and others were assassinated in this country."

Asked to identify those who had been assassinated, Rockefeller said:

"Well, as I said, we have no conclusive information but the President of the United States and the Attorney General were both assassinated tragically in this country."

When he was pressed still further, Rockefeller added his statement that "I think it's fair to say that no major undertakings were taken by the CIA" without presidential knowledge.

This vague implication that the murdered Kennedy's were knowledgable about the assassination plots angered two former assistants of Robert Kennedy.

"The White House and Sen. Church have both stated that neither John nor Robert Kennedy were involved in assassination attempts," said Frank Mankiewicz and Adam Walinsky in a joint statement. "Either Rockefeller has not read his own report or he is deliberately lying."

But Rockefeller's suggestion was basically concurred in by Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), a member of the Senate intelligence committee.

Goldwater said he "wouldn't be surprised" if the White House considered killing Castro. He said he was convinced that such an action would not have taken place without the President knowing about it.

"We had Castro moving in, we had the Bay of Pigs, we had the missile crisis and I wouldn't be surprised if what the feeling in the White House was, 'Let's take care of this thing some way'."

Goldwater, appearing on "Issues and Answers" (WMAL, ABC), said he had seen no evidence to show that any CIA plot went beyond the planning stage.